

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous, as a semi-autobiographical fiction, reflects the life of Vietnamese immigrants as the working class in America. The writer examines two main aspects in the story, namely intrinsic and extrinsic. In the intrinsic aspect, the writer elaborates on characters and characterization, settings of place and time. Meanwhile, in the extrinsic aspect, the analysis focuses on how the lives of each Vietnamese immigrant character are seen through the lens of Marxism.

The novel is narrated by the main character, Little Dog, who is the son of Rose and the grandson of Lan. The three of them are present as the main characters in the novel. To complement the story, other characters are introduced, such as Trevor, who is Little Dog's first love. Additionally, there is Paul, Lan's ex-husband, and Mr. Bufford, Trevor's grandfather and the owner of the tobacco field where Little Dog works. The story is narrated in two main settings, Saigon, Vietnam, and Connecticut, America. These two places are interrelated and serve as the focal point of Little Dog's memories as a Vietnamese immigrant living in America. *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* is constructed as a vignette where the chronological order of the story is not narrated sequentially. But in broad strokes, the author concludes that the novel has two timelines: During the Vietnam War and the present-day in the 1990s.

In a nuanced exploration utilizing Marxist theory, *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* unveils the struggles of Little Dog, Lan, and Rose as dramatic representations of Marxist concepts. The five key aspects within this theoretical framework—class consciousness, body commodification, exploitation, alienation, and hegemony—manifest in the life experiences of the main characters.

The issue of class consciousness is depicted through Rose and Little Dog, where despite being aware of their marginalized position both racially and economically, they cannot do anything to defy their fate. They experience being exploited as rough laborers. Rose undergoes exploitation as a worker in a clock factory and later in a nail salon, while Little Dog faces work pressure early on in the tobacco field. The weight of work pressure makes Rose feel estranged from herself, thinking that she is a cruel mother, like a monster.

Alienation, in this context, is subtly portrayed through Rose's internal struggles. The weight of work creates a sense of estrangement, leading her to perceive herself as a cruel and monstrous mother. Her biracial identity adds complexity to her thoughts, fostering a feeling of alienation both in her village in Vietnam and in America.

The commodification of the body can be seen in Lan's life as she confronts a stark reality wherein her limited educational opportunities as a woman from a rural village leave her with no alternative but to engage in sex work. This circumstance underscores the profound impact of societal constraints on the agency and choices

available to women like Lan, revealing how economic circumstances and structural inequalities force them into commodifying their bodies as a means of survival.

The issue of intrinsic hegemony is depicted through the position of yellow-skinned or Asian people as part of a marginalized society and how white people tend to hold power in America. Hegemony, as portrayed in the novel, manifests across multiple domains, exemplifying the entrenched power differentials. The legal system serves as a poignant illustration of this hegemonic influence, whereby the laws and further marginalizing yellow-skinned or Asian individuals, as in depicted by the finding of an article reporting the murder of a Chinese man in Texas. Media influence plays a pivotal role, shaping perceptions and narratives that reinforce existing power structures, contributing to the perpetuation of stereotypes and biases as depicted by the way the media presents Tiger Wood, a Black-Asian golf player, as only “Black golf player”, treating his Asian identity as invisible.

Finally, Ocean Vuong’s *On Earth We’re Briefly Gorgeous* (2019) is an elevating body of work. Much like the title suggests, the three members of the Vietnamese immigrants evoke the beauty of just being exist although in such a brief life they live in. Their struggles are never merely individual conflicts; they overlap and intertwine, creating layers that animate familial connection: the most gorgeous essence of mankind.